PROFESSOR, W. M. FOX-DECENT
CHAIR, MANITOBA TASK FORCE
ON THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD

NOTES FOR A PRESENTATION TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE PROPOSED COMPANION RESOLUTION TO THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA
APRIL 23, 1990

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

INTRODUCTION

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE...

I HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED TO SERVE AS THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE ON THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD.

I APPRECIATE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TO PRESENT A SUMMARY OF OUR THREE-PARTY CONSENSUS POSITION.

ALMOST EXACTLY SIX MONTHS HAVE PASSED SINCE OUR TASK FORCE REPORTED TO THE PREMIER OF MANITOBA, BUT WE BELIEVE OUR CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUE TO REFLECT ACCURATELY THE STATE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN OUR PROVINCE ON THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD.

THAT FACT WAS RECENTLY REAFFIRMED BY THE PREMIER AND THE OPPOSITION LEADERS WHO REQUESTED THAT I SEEK AN OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOUR COMMITTEE.

DURING OUR PUBLIC HEARINGS, THE MEMBERS OF THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE HEARD SOME 300 SUBMISSIONS AND RECEIVED 50 OTHERS IN WRITTEN FORM.

OUR HEARINGS, WHICH, COINCIDENTALLY, TOOK PLACE IN APRIL OF LAST YEAR, PRODUCED OVER 500 PAGES OF TRANSCRIPT. WE TOOK MUCH OF THE SUMMER AND PART OF THE FALL TO COMPLETE OUR REPORT.

WE RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT YOUR DEADLINES ARE A GREAT DEAL MORE DIFFICULT. IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO SPEND MORE TIME IN WINNIPEG THAN IN ANY OTHER LOCATION OUTSIDE OTTAWA IS SIGNIFICANT AND ENCOURAGING FOR THOSE OF US HERE.

I HOPE MY PRESENTATION AND THE TASK FORCE REPORT ITSELF WILL ASSIST YOU IN UNDERSTANDING OUR VIEWS AND THE OTHERS YOU WILL HEAR WHILE YOU ARE IN OUR PROVINCE.

IF I MAY, MR. CHAIRMAN, I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN BY DRAWING THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMITTEE TO SOME KEY SECTIONS FROM THE REPORT WHICH I THINK SUM UP ITS TONE AND ITS PURPOSE.

IN THE TRANSMITTAL LETTER WHICH BEGINS THE REPORT, I STATED:

"OUR CITIZENS WANT TO BE PART OF A VIBRANT AND UNITED COUNTRY WITHIN WHICH PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES FUNCTION VIGOROUSLY AND EFFECTIVELY IN THEIR OWN JURISDICTIONS, BUT ULTIMATELY EMBRACE AND SUPPORT THE NATIONAL INTEREST. THERE IS MUCH ROOM HERE FOR ENRICHING DIVERSITY; THERE MUST REMAIN, HOWEVER A FUNDAMENTAL COMMITMENT TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE NATION AS A WHOLE. IN THIS SPIRIT, WE STRONGLY SUPPORT THE GOAL OF QUEBEC BECOMING A FULL PARTICIPANT AGAIN IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS."

THEN, IN THE CONCLUSION OF THE REPORT, WE STATED:

"IN OUR DELIBERATIONS ON CHANGES TO THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD, WE ATTEMPTED TO BALANCE OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MANITOBANS WITH OUR OBLIGATIONS TO THE REST OF CANADA. WE APPLAUD THE INTENTION OF THE ACCORD TO MAKE QUEBEC A FULL CONSTITUTIONAL SIGNATORY. WE REALIZE AND HAVE TRIED TO BE SENSITIVE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD TO THE CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC, AND THE CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENTS OF ALL OF CANADA.

IN SUM, WE BELIEVE THE CHANGES RECOMMENDED HERE STRENGTHEN AND BUILD UPON THE BEST FEATURES OF THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD. WE OFFER THESE RECOMMENDATIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO THE CITIZENS OF MANITOBA AND TO THE GOVERNMENTS AND CITIZENS OF THE REST OF CANADA WITH RESPECT AND GOODWILL."

THESE SECTIONS OF THE REPORT UNDERLINE THE FACT THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF THOSE WHO APPEARED BEFORE US EMPHASIZED THAT, IN OFFERING CRITICISMS OF THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD, THEY WERE NOT REJECTING QUEBEC'S ASPIRATIONS.

REGRETTABLY, THAT FACT DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY WELL REPORTED.

OUR REPORT WAS NOT ANTI-QUEBEC.

MANITOBA IS NOT ANTI-QUEBEC.

ANYONE WHO SAT THROUGH THE HOURS AND HOURS OF HEARINGS AS MY COLLEAGUES AND I DID COULD NOT HELP BUT BE STRUCK BY THE COMMON THEMES OF TOLERANCE AND GOODWILL AND THE REPEATED EMPHASIS THAT WITHOUT QUEBEC AS A FULL AND WILLING PARTNER, THE CANADIAN DREAM COULD WITHER AND DIE.

OF COURSE, THERE IS SOME ANTI-QUEBEC AND ANTI-FRENCH SENTIMENT HERE IN OUR PROVINCE. YOU WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SEE SOME OF IT DURING YOUR STAY. WE KNOW THE SAME IS TRUE IN OTHER PROVINCES AND REGIONS, AND THAT IN QUEBEC THERE ARE SOME WHO FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT ENGLISH CANADIANS, ENGLISH CANADA, AND PERHAPS MANITOBA IN PARTICULAR.

IT IS NOT SURPRISING.

WE HAVE SOME UNFORTUNATE HISTORY TO PUT BEHIND US.

BUT WE ARE DOING SO ... AND THAT POSITIVE STORY SELDOM GETS TOLD.

IN THE LAST DECADE, THE NUMBER OF MANITOBA STUDENTS ENROLLED IN FRENCH IMMERSION CLASSES HAS INCREASED TO TEN TIMES EARLIER LEVELS. RIGHT NOW, THERE ARE SOME 25,000 PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS TAKING IMMERSION OR FRANCAIS CLASSES IN MANITOBA -- ABOUT 1 IN 8 MANITOBA STUDENTS TAKING VIRTUALLY ALL THEIR CLASSES ENTIRELY IN FRENCH. THAT IS MORE THAN ENOUGH STUDENTS TO FILL THE WINNIPEG ARENA OR THE QUEBEC COLISEE OR THE MONTREAL FORUM, AND THE NUMBERS CONTINUE TO GROW BY MORE THAN 1,000 A YEAR.

THE PROVINCE HAS MOVED FORWARD TO EXPAND FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES, AND THESE INITIATIVES HAVE BEEN WELCOMED IN THE FRANCO-MANITOBA COMMUNITY.

IN FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS, MANITOBANS HAVE CONSISTENTLY REGARDED QUEBEC AS ONE OF OUR CLOSEST AND MOST IMPORTANT ALLIES AND FRIENDS. WE HAVE MUCH IN COMMON. OUR ECONOMIC BASES ARE SURPRISINGLY SIMILAR. AND, OF COURSE, TOGETHER WE ARE ONTARIO'S CLOSEST NEIGHBOURS.

IT IS NOT A COINCIDENCE ... AND IT IS A SOURCE OF PRIDE TO MANY OF US ... THAT THE FIRST TWO ANNUAL CONFERENCES OF PROVINCIAL PREMIERS WERE HELD IN QUEBEC AND MANITOBA IN THE EARLY 1960'S HOSTED BY PREMIER LESAGE AND PREMIER ROBLIN, WHO WERE GOOD FRIENDS, AND THAT THE SAME BACK-TO-BACK PATTERN HAS BEEN REPEATED EACH DECADE. LAST YEAR'S ANNUAL PREMIERS' CONFERENCE WAS IN QUEBEC CITY AND THIS YEAR'S WILL BE IN WINNIPEG.

OF COURSE WE COMPETE WITH QUEBEC, AS WE DO WITH OTHER PROVINCES ... AND THE RULES DON'T ALWAYS SEEM FAIR ... BUT THAT EXPLAINS OUR INTEREST IN A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WHICH IS MORE SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF SMALLER REGIONS, AND IN A REFORMED SENATE.

IT DOESN'T MEAN WE REJECT QUEBEC.

AS I GO ON TO EXPLAIN OUR TASK FORCE'S RECOMMENDATIONS , I HOPE THAT THIS FUNDAMENTALLY IMPORTANT POINT WILL COME THROUGH.

THE ALL-PARTY TASK FORCE WAS COMPOSED TO ENSURE THE MAXIMUM DEGREE OF OBJECTIVITY. AS AN ACADEMIC AND INDEPENDENT POLITICAL OBSERVER, I WAS CHOSEN AS CHAIR.

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK FORCE WAS BALANCED BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION MEMBERS: 3 CONSERVATIVES, 2 LIBERALS, AND ONE NEW DEMOCRAT. THE THREE PARTIES ATTACHED A CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE TO THE WORK OF THIS TASK FORCE, AND WERE WILLING TO DELEGATE MUCH TIME AND MANY RESOURCES TO EXPLORING THE PUBLIC VIEW AND CRAFTING A CONSENSUS REPORT OUTLINING MANITOBA'S POSITION ON MEECH LAKE. THE MOST EXTENSIVE AND OPEN HEARINGS CONDUCTED ON THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD IN CANADA WERE HELD IN THIS PROVINCE.

PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD IS VERY HIGH IN MANITOBA. I WAS IMPRESSED BY THE THOUGHTFULNESS AND CARE OF THE PRESENTATIONS WE HEARD. THEY WERE "SINCERE EXPRESSIONS OF THE DESIRE OF MANITOBANS TO COOPERATE IN THE STRENGTHENING OF THE CANADIAN POLITICAL UNION." THE PUBLIC EXPRESSED GENUINE CONCERNS OVER THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ACCORD. AND, THEY WERE NOT ALONE IN THESE CONCERNS. MANY MANITOBA CONCERNS WERE SHARED BY PRESENTERS ELSEWHERE, INCLUDING ONTARIO AND NEW BRUNSWICK.

THE HEARINGS SUPPLIED THE TASK FORCE WITH AMPLE MATERIAL TO ADVISE THE MANITOBA GOVERNMENT ON THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD. THE REPORT IS SOLIDLY FOUNDED UPON PUBLIC OPINION. WITH YOUR INDULGENCE, I WOULD NOW LIKE TO REVIEW THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE, FIRST IN RELATION TO THE NEW BRUNSWICK RESOLUTION WHICH YOU ARE STUDYING, AND THEN IN RELATION TO OUR REMAINING CONCERNS.

COMPARISON BETWEEN MANITOBA AND NEW BRUNSWICK

THE MEMBERS OF THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE HAVE RECENTLY MET TO DISCUSS THE NEW BRUNSWICK COMPANION RESOLUTION AND HAVE AGREED THAT IT REPRESENTS AN HONEST ATTEMPT TO ACCOMMODATE THE VARIOUS VIEWS WHICH HAVE ARISEN IN CANADA OVER THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD. ITS SPIRIT IS VERY POSITIVE. THE EFFORTS NEW BRUNSWICK HAS MADE TO BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN THE PROVINCIAL POSITIONS IS COMMENDABLE. WE, AS A TASK FORCE, WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROCESS OF BRIDGE-BUILDING BEGUN BY NEW BRUNSWICK.

THE NEW BRUNSWICK COMPANION RESOLUTION ACCOMMODATES THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE POSITION IN A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT RESPECTS AND I WILL REVIEW THESE NOW.

- THE NEW BRUNSWICK RESOLUTION COINCIDES WITH THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION THAT THE TERRITORIES BE GIVEN THE POWER TO NOMINATE SENATORS AND SUPREME COURT JUSTICES. THIS IS AN ENCOURAGING STEP TOWARDS ACCOMMODATING THE CONCERNS OF NORTHERN CANADIANS.

- THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE CONCURS IN THE PROPOSAL OF THE NEW BRUNSWICK RESOLUTION TO ADD CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS DIRECTLY AFFECTING THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES OF CANADA TO THE LIST OF SUBJECT MATTER TO BE DISCUSSED AT FUTURE CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCES AND TO INVITE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND THE TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS TO ATTEND THOSE CONFERENCES. THIS IS AN AFFIRMATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF DEFINING ABORIGINAL RIGHTS IN CANADA AND RECOGNIZES THE NEED TO CONTINUE THE PROCESS BEGUN IN 1982 AND WHICH REMAINS UNFINISHED.

- OUR TASK FORCE REPORT AND THE NEW BRUNSWICK RESOLUTION ARE CONSISTENT IN NOT REQUIRING CHANGES TO THE IMMIGRATION PROVISIONS OF THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD. HOWEVER, WE ADVISE REVIEW OF THESE PROVISIONS AND ANY AGREEMENTS MADE PURSUANT TO THEM, EVERY FIVE YEARS.

- THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE VIEWS THE PROVISION IN THE NEW BRUNSWICK RESOLUTION ENABLING THE CREATION OF NEW PROVINCES OUT OF THE TERRITORIES BY THE CONSENT OF PARLIAMENT ALONE AS A POSITIVE STEP, ALTHOUGH THIS MEASURE DIFFERS FROM OUR TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION, WHICH WOULD ADMIT NEW PROVINCES ON THE 7/50 FORMULA, IT IS A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT OVER THE MEECH LAKE PROVISION REQUIRING UNANIMITY. HOWEVER, THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ON RESTORING SENATE REFORM AND EXTENSION OF PROVINCIAL BOUNDARIES TO THE 7/50 AMENDMENT PROVISION OF 1982 REMAIN UNRESOLVED IN THE NEW BRUNSWICK INITIATIVE.

- THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE AND THE NEW BRUNSWICK RESOLUTION ARE CONSISTENT IN REQUIRING CHANGES TO THE PROCESS OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT IN CANADA. WHILE THE NEW BRUNSWICK PROVISION WOULD REQUIRE A PUBLIC HEARING PROCESS BEFORE CHANGES ARE MADE TO THE CONSTITUTION, THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE WOULD MANDATE PUBLIC HEARINGS AFTER THE FIRST MINISTERS FORMULATE AN AMENDMENT BUT BEFORE THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT IS SIGNED BY THE FIRST MINISTERS. MANITOBA NOW REQUIRES LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS TO BE HELD ON ANY CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS. THE NEW BRUNSWICK RESOLUTION WOULD ONLY REINFORCE THE PRESENT PROCEDURE IN THIS PROVINCE.

THUS SEVERAL IMPORTANT PROVISIONS IN THE NEW BRUNSWICK RESOLUTION REPRESENT AREAS OF CONSISTENCY WITH THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE REPORT. IN THAT REGARD, THEY ARE A GENUINE EFFORT AT REACHING OUT TO MANITOBA WHICH THE TASK FORCE WELCOMES. HOWEVER, A NUMBER OF MANITOBA'S FUNDAMENTAL CONCERNS HAVE NOT BEEN DEALT WITH. I WILL TURN TO THESE POINTS NOW:

OUTSTANDING CONCERNS OF MANITOBA

THE FOLLOWING CONCERNS OF THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE ON MEECH LAKE REMAIN OUTSTANDING:

- IN OUR CANADA CLAUSE (CLAUSE 2) THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDED THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE RECOGNITION OF CANADA AS A FEDERAL STATE WITH A DISTINCT NATIONAL IDENTITY AND TO RECOGNIZE THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE TO CANADA BY ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES. THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENTS AND LEGISLATURES IN CANADA TO UPHOLD THESE FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS IS RECOGNIZED AS IS THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND LEGISLATURE OF QUEBEC TO UPHOLD THAT PROVINCE'S DISTINCT IDENTITY WITHIN CANADA. THE TASK FORCE CRAFTED THIS RECOMMENDATION WHILE RESPECTING QUEBEC'S REQUEST FOR RECOGNITION AS A DISTINCT SOCIETY. HOWEVER, THE TASK FORCE BELIEVES

THAT THE EVOLVING HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL REALITY OF CANADA SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED AS WELL THROUGH THE INCLUSION OF THESE ADDITIONAL FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS.

- OUR TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS THAT THE ENTIRE CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS BE INCLUDED IN CLAUSE 16 OF THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD TO ENSURE THAT CHARTER RIGHTS ARE NOT ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE ACCORD. THE ACCORD HAD PROPOSED THIS PROTECTION ONLY FOR ABORIGINAL AND MULTICULTURAL RIGHTS. EXTENDING THIS PROTECTION TO S.28 OF THE CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS AS RECOMMENDED IN THE NEW BRUNSWICK RESOLUTION IS A WELCOME ADDITION. HOWEVER, DURING OUR HEARINGS WE RECEIVED MANY SUBMISSIONS WHICH PERSUASIVELY ARGUED THAT THE CHARTER IN ITS ENTIRETY BE PROTECTED. THUS THE TASK FORCE AGREED TO RECOMMEND THAT THE WHOLE CHARTER BE INCLUDED IN THE NON DEROGATION CLAUSE (CLAUSE 16). IN OUR VIEW THIS WOULD NOT DETRACT FROM QUEBEC'S PRESENT POWERS BECAUSE, IN OUR PROPOSAL, THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF ITS GOVERNMENT AND LEGISLATURE TO UPHOLD ITS DISTINCT IDENTITY IS AFFIRMED IN THE CANADA CLAUSE.

- THE TASK FORCE WAS ALSO DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT SENATE REFORM. THUS, IT RECOMMENDED THAT REFORM SHOULD OCCUR ON THE BASIS OF THE 7/50 AMENDMENT FORMULA BECAUSE IN OUR VIEW, A UNANIMITY REQUIREMENT VIRTUALLY DENIES THE POSSIBILITY OF SENATE REFORM. CERTAINLY THIS VIEW IS SHARED ELSEWHERE, BOTH EAST AND WEST.

FURTHER, THE TASK FORCE UNDERSCORED THE NECESSITY FOR URGENT ACTION ON SENATE REFORM. THUS, WE RECOMMENDED THE CREATION OF A MANITOBA COMMITTEE TO ADVISE THE MANITOBA GOVERNMENT ON SENATE REFORM. SINCE SENATE REFORM MUST BE GIVEN TOP PRIORITY IN FUTURE CONSTITUTIONAL DISCUSSIONS, WORK SHOULD BEGIN NOW TO CONSIDER THE POWERS AND STRUCTURE OF A REFORMED SENATE. THE MANITOBA GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THE CREATION OF A SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SENATE REFORM, SIMILAR IN FORM TO THIS TASK FORCE.

WE ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH THE NEW BRUNSWICK RESOLUTION WHICH RECOGNIZES SENATE REFORM AS A TOP PRIORITY IN THE FIRST MINISTERS' CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCES. THUS, THE NEW BRUNSWICK RESOLUTION MEETS THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION PART-WAY ON THIS ISSUE. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE INTENSITY OF WESTERN CANADIAN PUBLIC OPINION, IT IS NECESSARY TO GO MUCH FURTHER IN THE DIRECTION OF FINDING CONSENSUS ON THE CRITICAL ISSUE OF THE SENATE AT AN EARLY DATE.

THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THIS CONSENSUS COULD BE BASED ARE TO BE FOUND ON PAGES 34 & 35 OF OUR REPORT. ALLOW ME TO REVIEW THEM WITH YOU NOW, IN RESPONSE TO THE NEW BRUNSWICK INVITATION TO OTHERS, PERHAPS MANITOBA IN PARTICULAR, TO BE MORE SPECIFIC ON THIS SUBJECT.

MANITOBANS CALLED FOR AN ELECTED SENATE. THEY ARGUED THAT SHIFTING THE POWER OF NOMINATING SENATORS TO THE PROVINCES DOES NOT ANSWER MANITOBANS' CONCERNS. THE ARGUMENT AGAINST THE EXERCISE OF POWER BY AN APPOINTED SENATE WILL STILL HOLD. TO REGAIN LEGITIMACY, THE SENATE SHOULD BE AN ELECTED BODY.

MANITOBANS FAVOUR AN EQUAL SENATE. SOME ARGUED FOR A SENATE WITH EQUAL REPRESENTATION FROM EACH OF THE REGIONS OF CANADA. THEY BELIEVED THAT THIS TYPE OF SENATE WOULD BE ABLE TO DISCUSS REGIONAL PROBLEMS WITH INDEPENDENCE AND AUTHORITY. HOWEVER, MOST PRESENTERS ENDORSED PROVINCIAL EQUALITY INSTEAD OF REGIONAL EQUALITY, WITH CONTINUED PROVISION FOR TERRITORIAL SEATS.

MANITOBANS CALLED FOR A MORE PRODUCTIVE AND USEFUL SENATE. HOWEVER, VIEWS VARIED AS TO HOW THE SENATE COULD BE MADE AN EFFECTIVE BUT NOT OBSTRUCTIONIST BODY. ... WHAT CONCERNED MANITOBANS MOST, WAS ENSURING THAT THE SENATE HAVE SUFFICIENT POWERS TO PROVIDE THEM WITH A VOICE THAT WOULD BE HEARD AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL WITHOUT PARALYZING THE NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT.

- THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE ON MEECH LAKE RECOMMENDED THAT THE SPENDING POWER PROVISION (CLAUSE 7) BE DELETED FROM THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD. NEW BRUNSWICK WOULD ADD TO THE CONSTITUTION A REQUIREMENT THAT THE SENATE REPORT EVERY FIVE YEARS ON THE OPERATION OF EQUALIZATION AND THAT THIS REPORT BE REFERRED TO THE NEXT ANNUAL FIRST MINISTERS' ECONOMIC CONFERENCE. WHILE THE NEW BRUNSWICK PROPOSAL IS COMMENDABLE, IT DOES NOT REALLY ADDRESS MANITOBA'S RECOMMENDATION ON CLAUSE 7.

MR. CHAIRMAN, I HAVE ADDRESSED MANITOBA'S PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE UPON THE DECISIONS OF 1987. WE BELIEVE THAT THESE RECOMMENDATIONS BALANCE PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE ACCORD IN MANITOBA WITH OUR PROVINCE'S OBLIGATIONS TO THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA AND TO THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC ESPECIALLY. WE ARE HEARTENED BY THE BEGINNING MADE BY NEW BRUNSWICK IN RESOLVING THE CURRENT NATIONAL DILEMMA. HOWEVER, OUR RECOMMENDATIONS CALL FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS TO THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD. THIS REMAINS THE CONSENSUS POSITION OF THE 3 POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE MANITOBA LEGISLATURE AS REPRESENTED BY THE TASK FORCE.

CONCLUSION

IT IS YOUR MANDATE TO STUDY NEW BRUNSWICK'S PROPOSED COMPANION RESOLUTION AND REPORT YOUR FINDINGS TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS. I WOULD ASK YOU TO CONSIDER MANITOBA'S OUTSTANDING CONCERNS. AS CHAIR OF OUR TASK FORCE, IT IS MY FIRM VIEW THAT OUR RECOMMENDATIONS MUST BE ADDRESSED IN A REASONABLE WAY. I SHOULD NOTE THAT, WHILE I HAVE A MANDATE TO PRESENT OUR TASK FORCE REPORT AND TO DISCUSS THE NEW BRUNSWICK RESOLUTION IN LIGHT OF OUR RECOMMENDATIONS, I HAVE NO MANDATE TO NEGOTIATE OR MAKE COMMITMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE TASK FORCE MEMBERS OR THEIR POLITICAL PARTIES. THOSE ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES.

HOWEVER, I DO HAVE A MANDATE TO EMPHASIZE THE FACT -- AS OUR REPORT DID, AND AS INDIVIDUAL TASK FORCE MEMBERS HAVE FROM TIME TO TIME -- THAT WE OFFER OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION AND DISCUSSION ... NOT AS A TAKE-IT-OR-LEAVE-IT PACKAGE IN WHICH NO FLEXIBILITY OR NO MODIFICATION IS POSSIBLE. I FEEL CERTAIN THAT MANITOBA WILL CONSIDER ANY FURTHER PROPOSALS DEVELOPED TO ADDRESS OUR CONCERNS IN A SPIRIT OF GOODWILL, AND ACCOMMODATION.

MANITOBANS ARE REALISTS. AND MANITOBANS ARE STRONG CANADIANS, FIRST AND FOREMOST.

WE UNDERSTAND AND ACCEPT THAT THIS NATION WAS BUILT ON COMPROMISES AND HAS BEEN KEPT TOGETHER THE SAME WAY. IN OUR REPORT WE TRIED TO BUILD SOME BRIDGES AND I BELIEVE THE POLITICAL LEADERS IN THIS PROVINCE ARE SINCERE IN WANTING TO DO SO NOW.

WE ARE ALSO A PROVINCE WHICH IS PREPARED TO TAKE A FIRM STAND BASED ON PRINCIPLES WHICH WE BELIEVE TO BE RIGHT ... TO BE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF OUR COUNTRY AND OF FUTURE GENERATIONS. WE WILL NOT TURN OUR BACKS ON THOSE PRINCIPLES....

IN THE COMING WEEKS, IT MAY BE TEMPTING FOR SOME TO ARGUE ... "WELL MANITOBA YOU'VE BEEN OFFERED SOLUTIONS TO 2 OR 3 OF YOUR CONCERNS ... SURELY, THAT IS ENOUGH!" THE PROBLEM WITH THAT KIND OF SIMPLISTIC ARITHMETIC IS THAT IT IGNORES THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES DISCUSSED IN OUR REPORT. I FEEL I SHOULD RAISE THIS CAUTION BECAUSE SOME MAY REGARD THE EFFORT TO ACHIEVE A WORKABLE COMPROMISE AS JUST A NUMBERS GAME. IT IS FAR MORE THAN THAT. AND IT IS HARD FOR ME TO BELIEVE THAT ANY POLITICAL LEADER IN MANITOBA COULD AGREE TO A PROPOSAL WHICH IGNORES SOME OF OUR FUNDAMENTAL CONCERNS.

IN CONCLUSION, I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE SOME IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS. FIRST, THE MANITOBA RECOMMENDATIONS WERE MADE UNANIMOUSLY BY AN ALL-PARTY TASK FORCE AND ARE FIRMLY GROUNDED ON PUBLIC OPINION IN MANITOBA. WE URGE THE PARLIAMENTARY SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO OBSERVE THE CLOSE PARALLEL BETWEEN THE DISSATISFACTION WITH THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD IN MANITOBA AND THE DISCONTENT REFLECTED IN THE HEARINGS HELD ELSEWHERE IN CANADA. PUBLIC HEARINGS HAVE CLEARLY PROVIDED THE FIRST MINISTERS WITH THE MANDATE TO ENHANCE THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD AND THE PROCESS OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM. SECOND, WITH REASONABLE CHANGES, THE MEECH LAKE ACCORD CAN BECOME A CONSTRUCTIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. INSTEAD OF DIVIDING US AS A NATION, AN ENHANCED MEECH LAKE ACCORD SHOULD DRAW US CLOSER TOGETHER. THIRD, THE RESOLUTION OFFERED BY NEW BRUNSWICK PREMIER FRANK MCKENNA IS AN HONEST EFFORT AT ACCOMMODATION AND A PRAISEWORTHY FIRST STEP TOWARDS SOLVING THE NATIONAL IMPASSE. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS SHOULD STILL BE MADE TO ANSWER THE CONCERNS OF CANADIANS OVER THE ACCORD.

I OFFER THIS EXPLANATION OF THE MANITOBA TASK FORCE POSITION TO YOU AS A FURTHER STEP FORWARD IN RESOLVING THE MEECH LAKE DILEMMA. I STRESS OUR COMMITMENT TO QUEBEC AND INDEED ALL OUR SISTER PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES. NOW WE ASK CANADA, QUEBEC, AND THE OTHER PROVINCES TO OPEN THEIR HEARTS AND MINDS TO OUR REASONABLE SUGGESTIONS, WHICH ARE PUT FORWARD IN A SPIRIT OF GOOD WILL AND GOOD FAITH.

THANK YOU.